



Rail buffs and Wasatch County officials take test ride over scenic rail route from Heber City through Provo Canyon.

Buffs Plead For 'Creeper'

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By JAN PADFIELD

Deseret News Staff Writer

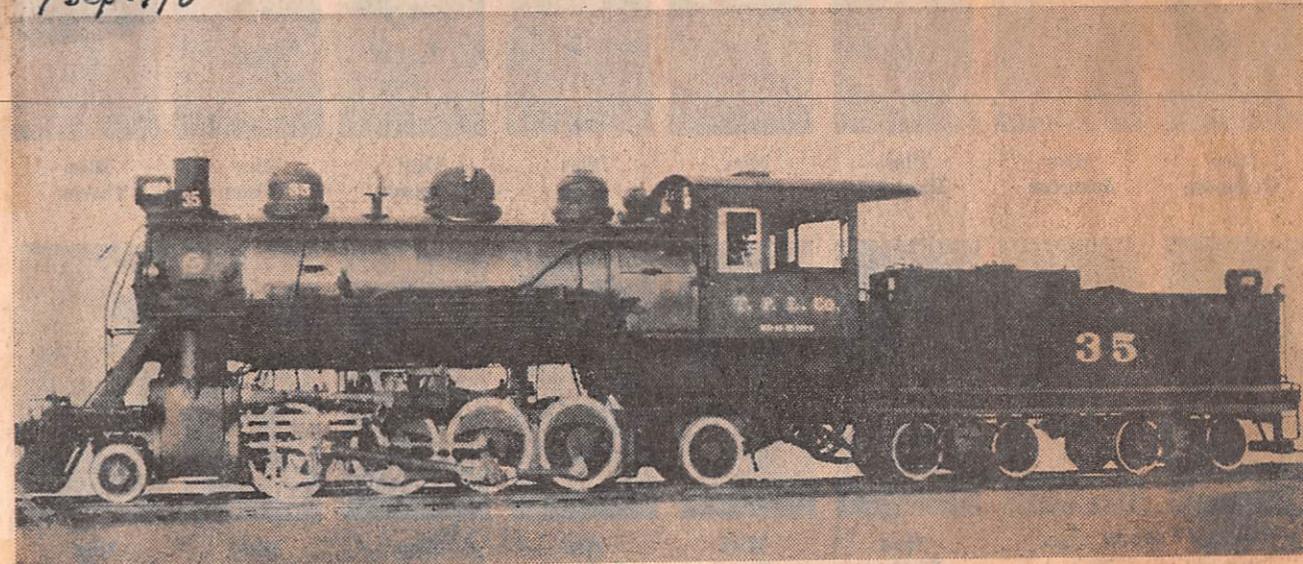
HEBER CITY — One of Utah's potentially great recreational and tourist attractions may be lost in less than two weeks.

"If we let this go, we'll have bitter regrets in a few years, but it will have passed from the scene forever," Lowe Ashton, local businessman and past president of the Wasatch County Chamber of Commerce, said at a meeting Tuesday night in Wasatch County Courthouse.

He spoke of the old Denver and Rio Grande Railroad right-of-way through Wasatch County and down Provo Canyon, pathway of the old "Heber Creeper."

Wasatch County Chapter of Commerce and Wasatch Railway Museum and Foundation propose reviving the colorful and dramatic era of the steam locomotive on a segment of D & RGW trackage through scenery which justifies local claim of "paradise of the Rockies."

The railroad museum buffs (affiliated with National Railway Historical Society) have six rare antique engines in



Old locomotive, once used in logging operation, may be Heber City tourist train.

fine working order with unlimited maintenance parts and equipment, plus cars and even an old wooden caboose. The tracks and roadbed have been pronounced in good condition with two miles of 75 pound rails and about 10 miles of 90 pound rails.

But State Department of Highways purchased the rails and right-of-way last spring

and may consider the area for super highway construction. However, they have opened bids for removal of the tracks and will let the bids Sept. 21.

"We're not asking anyone for anything except time. The Road Commission told us they have no plan of highway construction for the Wildwood to Heber section until at least 1974. We just want them to

delay junking it and allow its use for the next two or three years," Leon Ritchie, chamber president, said.

"We can prove the economic feasibility of this project," Elmo Jacobsen, chairman of Wasatch County Commission, said.

There are 102 lines operating antique locomotives as recreational and tourist

attractions all over the country and they do a tremendous business, it was reported. Closest competition would be the Yosemite and Skunk Routes in California and the Durango-Silverton, Colo. project, according to J. R. Edwards. Charles H. Nielsen, both Salt Lake City, and Ed M. McLaughlin, Ogden, offi-

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Rail Buffs Plead For 'Creeper'

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cers of the Wasatch Railway
Museum and Foundation.

Tuesday, a small gasoline engine was pressed into service for a trial run. Leaving the old terminal, the little train clickety-clacked through the lush valley basking in early autumn sunlight. Farmers waved a friendly salute, pausing from cutting the last alfalfa or plowing the brown furrows.

RACE TRAIN

A white mare and brown colt raced the rail intruder along a meadow, edged in waving goldenrod. The valley stretched serenely in afternoon haze from Midway—"Little Switzerland," resting in her Alp-like setting—to Charleston, near the green waters of Deer Creek Reservoir.

A newly painted red barn contrasted sharply with the artist's delight . . . a weathered, dilapidated gray one. Black and white cows plodded the long lane at milking time while others crossed a meandering stream that later became a slough surrounded by brown cat-tails thrusting white bundles of parachutes into the breeze. At Stringtown a cross-pole fence indicates the boundary of Wasatch Mountain State Park.

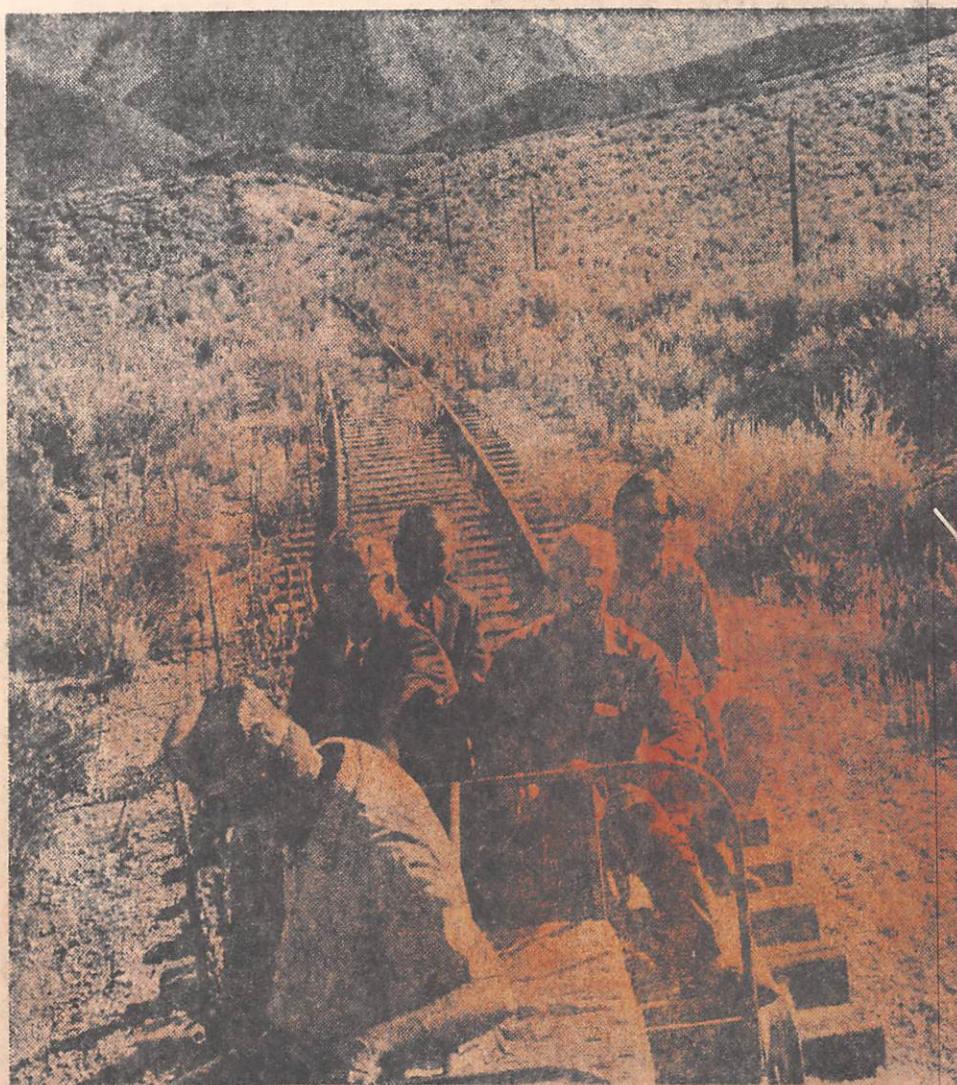
MANY PLANS

"I visualize here an engine and cars with Swiss motif and European design, taking off on a spur line leading to the planned Swiss Village up past Midway," someone offered.

"A marina is planned in the reservoir's natural harbor at Decker Canyon with swimming areas along the sandy beaches" said Russell Wall, county commissioner, as a large blue heron rose from the shoreline.

"I can see a masked bandit raid staged by horses and riders coming from that rocky pinnacle . . . in the best Butch Cassidy style."

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